

UTAH SAFE SCHOOLS LEADERSHIP CONSORTIUM

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR SAFER SCHOOLS

As we enter a new century, our nation's schools face formidable challenges not previously encountered in our history as a nation. Technological and societal conditions exist today which pose significant risks to the safety and health of our schools' children and young adults. The risk of an emergency situation developing at a Utah school is escalating in both number and complexity. Critical situations can develop from the use of hazardous materials in our communities, social unrest, gang conflicts, domestic terrorism and other illegal activities; many of these involve the threat of significant violence on the school campus.

Our society places the moral and legal responsibility on schools to provide a safe and secure learning environment for our youth. To meet that obligation, schools must be prepared to respond to any emergency situation that may arise. The ***UTAH SAFE SCHOOLS LEADERSHIP CONSORTIUM*** (USSLC) hopes to make a substantive contribution toward fulfilling that need.

The Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium has been established to assist in opening dialogue and enhancing communication between *stakeholders* sharing a common interest and concern about the potential for violence in the schools of our State. The *Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium* brings together leaders from the public school system, higher education, law enforcement, emergency management, and the community-at-large in a proactive partnership to draw on each others' resources and varied perspectives.

The Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium is dedicated to the concept that, "Every student will attend a school that is safe and secure, one that is free of fear and conducive to learning". This statement serves as the vision of the Consortium, and making this vision a reality focuses the Consortium's commitment on the success of every student.

- The goal of the *Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium* is to make Utah's schools and the children and young adults who attend them, *SAFE FROM VIOLENCE*, first-and-foremost, and, subsequently, safe from a variety of other hazards to which they are also vulnerable.
- The purpose of the *Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium* is to encourage an enhanced level of *awareness* and *preparedness* for the potential of violence on school campuses; it is also to enhance our awareness of our collective ability to address the challenge of school violence effectively and proactively, by forming *new partnerships and alliances* between our various organizations and communities.
- The objective of the *Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium* is to open, encourage and enhance *dialogue* between the schools, law enforcement, emergency management, and those in the community-at-large who share a common concern regarding the safety of Utah's schools, now and in the future.

The approach of the *Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium* emphasizes that schools must put into action more than one strategy for addressing school violence or the potential for such violence. Schools cannot assume that only using metal detectors will ensure safe and secure learning environments. They cannot just use peer mediation programs and expect to eliminate the potential for violence. Schools instead must synthesize several different strategies to address the different dimensions of safe and secure learning environments.

The different dimensions of the Consortium's approach to safe schools can be identified by the concepts of "*Place*", "*People*", and "*Purpose*". "*Place*" refers to the physical environment of the school, where safety and security should not even have to be concerns, so that successful student outcomes are more likely to occur. "*People*" refers to the people who interact in the school and create the school climate by focusing on positive relationships. "*Purpose*" refers to the reason the school exists in the first place: teaching and learning, and doing all things necessary so that this purpose can be realized in an environment conducive to learning and free from fear.

WHY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT? WHAT DOES EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HAVE TO DO WITH SAFER SCHOOLS?

Emergency management, as a discipline, is in a unique position to facilitate the goals, purpose and objectives of the *Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium*. The mission of emergency management is to save lives, prevent injury, protect property and preserve the environment in the event of disasters and large-scale emergencies. To accomplish this mission, emergency management seeks to support and enhance the functions of all the emergency response agencies by coordinating the resources they need to perform effectively in large-scale events. Emergency management endeavors to bring together multiple and diverse organizations and disciplines, and orchestrate them into a coordinated, unified effort against our common foe, the vulnerability and risk to which we are exposed by natural, technological and man-made hazards. Emergency management performs this function through the coordination of resources in support of the emergency response efforts of law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services, public works and search-and-rescue operations. School violence is a very real hazard that has indeed become a local, State and national disaster, which threatens our school communities.

While in session, our schools are themselves *communities*, like any other. We need to *mitigate* the risk of hazards faced by our schools *before* they become disasters. We need to plan and prepare for an effective *response* should disasters occur, as well as an organized, systematic *recovery* after the danger has past. Emergency management brings together the agencies, people and resources to make this happen.

We now clearly recognize that the hazards to which our schools are vulnerable are not limited to fire, earthquake and flood, but also to incidents of violence, including terrorism. Emergency management seeks to serve as a catalyst and advocate for the prevention of school crime and violence by providing information and resources, and identify strategies and promising programs which support safe schools for the children and young adults of Utah.

The objective of emergency management's safe schools initiative is to support educators, law enforcers and other youth-serving professionals in the area of school violence prevention and safe school planning by providing information, training and leadership in broad-based, multi-hazard school safety.

Organizations supporting the *Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium* include the following:

**Office of the Governor
Office of the Attorney General
State Legislators
Utah State Office of Education
Utah Parent Teachers Association
Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice
Utah Chiefs of Police Association
Utah Sheriffs Association
Utah School of the Future Project, Utah State University
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Fire and Emergency Services Organizations**

The *Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium*, in cooperation with the Division of Comprehensive Emergency Management, has already produced three important and very successful training events for the school and emergency response communities:

- ***School Violence Conference*** was presented at Davis High School on November 6, 1999, and was attended by over three hundred participants representing twenty-four of Utah's twenty-nine Counties.
- ***"Connecting the Schools and Law Enforcement"***: A day-long training course conducted on January 12, 2000, with guest presenter Rudy Bustamante of the Phoenix Police Department, a specialist in school-law enforcement-community relations. This course was attended by over 150 participants.
- ***School Violence Workshop***: presented on January 13, 2000, for over 400 participants representing all levels of Utah's educational system as well as all emergency response disciplines and emergency management. This workshop featured an opening plenary session and thirty subsequent workshop sessions on a variety of school violence prevention and response topics.

The *Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium* believes that school and community leaders must communicate, collaborate and coordinate closely with law enforcement and emergency management officials if we are to have safe schools in Utah. **Leaders in education, law enforcement, emergency management and the community who are interested in contributing to making Utah's schools safer through participation in the *Utah Safe Schools Leadership Consortium* are encouraged to join, by calling Dr. Stephen Rundquist, Utah Division of Comprehensive Emergency Management, 801-538-3400.**

Emergency Management for Schools

Disaster often strikes without warning, without cause. It is imperative that the school community acknowledges and prepares for disasters and critical events. These events may take many forms.

Terrorism is no longer something that happens to other people. The reality of mass violence within our communities and the school systems is one we all must face.

Crisis situations necessitate disaster planning and response. It is critical that the public safety and emergency management agencies within your community be a part of the planning process with schools as they will be the emergency responders to a local school disaster.

These critical events violate the integrity of the stability within the school environment. It is critical that schools are able to respond to a disaster and regain stability as quickly as possible. For some children, school is the only stability they know. The school community must have a plan to address the trauma of a disaster that will help children and staff resolve the crisis in their lives and recover.

Training Programs

The Utah Division of Comprehensive Emergency Management (CEM) is committed to working with the school community and local agencies to provide training and technical assistance. CEM offers training in a variety of emergency management topics. Much of this training addresses the needs of the school community in planning for and responding to emergency situations. These training programs can be brought to your community at no charge. The CEM Training staff works with the local Emergency Management Director to facilitate a training program that fits your needs.

We have helpful information available on emergency operations planning and model safe school policies. We can provide a field delivered training course in your school, school district or school area on many issues within emergency management that affect schools. These include:

- Safe School Strategies
- Emergency Operations Planning
- School Hazard Analysis
- School Hazard Mitigation
- Identification of Critical Facilities and Site Assessments
- Bomb Threat Management (with Utah Association of Bomb Squads & Investigators)
- Dealing with the Media During and After a Critical Incident
- Disaster Response and Critical Incident Management
- Multi-Hazard Safety Program for Schools
- Crisis Intervention Team Development
- Trauma Recovery Issues
- Earthquake Planning, Procedures and Mitigation
- School Campus Emergency Response Team Training

- More Effective Skills in Communication, Leadership and Team Building

The public safety and emergency management agencies within your community must be a part of the planning and training process along with the schools' administration and staff. They will be the emergency responders to a local school disaster. CEM's field delivered training targets those who work together as a team on emergency management within the school systems. This team may include:

- School Administrators
- School Principals
- Lead Teachers
- School Counselors
- Law Enforcement, School Resource Officers and/or school security personnel
- Fire Services
- Emergency Medical Services
- Faith Services (clergy)
- Community Mental Health Services

The training programs also use simulations of critical incidents (tabletop exercises) involving a school disaster as a tangible example of the significance of planning and training on emergency response operations within the school setting. For further information, please contact the Utah Division on Comprehensive Emergency Management at 801-538-3400, or 1-800-72-FAULT.